

The 9/11 Commission Report

Summary of Lessons and Recommendations for Local Governments

“We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management.” (page 339)

Funding to States and Local Governments – Chapter 12

Recommendations

- “Recommendation: Homeland security assistance should be based strictly on an assessment of risks and vulnerabilities. Now, in 2004, Washington, D.C., and New York City are certainly at the top of any such list. We understand the contention that every state and city needs to have some minimum infrastructure for emergency response. But federal homeland security assistance should not remain a program for general revenue sharing. It should supplement state and local resources based on the risks or vulnerabilities that merit additional support. Congress should not use this money to pork barrel.” (page 396)
- “The allocation of funds should be based on an assessment of threats and vulnerabilities. That assessment should consider such factors as population, population density, vulnerability, and the presence of critical infrastructure within each state. In addition, the federal government should require each state receiving federal emergency preparedness funds to provide an analysis based on the same criteria to justify the distribution of funds in that state.” (page 396)
- “We recommend that a panel of security experts be convened to develop written benchmarks for evaluating community needs. We further recommend that federal homeland security funds be allocated in accordance with those benchmarks, and that states be required to abide by those benchmarks in disbursing the federal funds. The benchmarks will be imperfect and subjective; they will continually evolve.” (page 396)
- “Recommendation: The Department of Homeland Security and its oversight committees should regularly assess the types of threats the country faces to determine (a) the adequacy of the government’s plans – and the progress against those plans – to protect America’s critical infrastructure and (b) the readiness of the government to respond to the threats that the United States might face.” (page 428)
- The Department of Homeland Security “should identify those elements of our transportation, energy, communications, financial, and other institutions that need to be protected, develop plans to protect that infrastructure, and exercise the mechanisms to enhance preparedness. This means going well beyond the jobs of the agencies that have been brought together inside the department.” (page 428)

All Local First Responders - Chapters 9 and 12

Lessons

- Radio, data, and operational interoperability is key to mounting an effective response (Chapter 9).
- Radios need to be of an appropriate strength, have appropriate channels, and have appropriate capacity to handle a large multi-agency response (Chapter 9).
- Radio channels are likely to become overwhelmed:
 - Many Fire Department of New York (FDNY) units responding to the World Trade Center (WTC) used Channel 1 (following protocol), which at times was unintelligible with so many units attempting to use it (page 298).

- Responding FDNY Battalion Chiefs climbing the towers used a Command Channel that could be monitored by the Chiefs in the lobby (page 298). These communications proved to be easier (Chapter 9).
- It was difficult to communicate the collapse of the South Tower and subsequent order(s) to evacuate the North Tower to many of the responders in the North Tower – many responders heard about the evacuation order by word of mouth, some ignored it, and some never received it (Chapter 9).
- Radio channels at the Pentagon were also quickly overwhelmed, cell phones were useless, and pagers provided an effective means of communication but were not possessed by most firefighters (page 315).
- Use and understanding of the Incident Command System (ICS) is critical:
 - FDNY was the lead response agency (page 319).
 - The response lacked unified command and integrated communications (page 319).
 - The Port Authority of New York “lacked any standard operating procedures to govern how officers from multiple commands would respond to and then be staged and utilized at a major incident at the WTC.” (page 282)
 - New York’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) was established to serve as an interagency coordinator in emergency response, a symptom of looming coordination issues (pages 284-285).
 - Mayor Giuliani had directed appropriate agencies to serve as “Incident Commander” for different types of emergencies yet New York Police Department (NYPD) and FDNY considered themselves operationally autonomous (page 285).
 - Significant numbers of staff from various agencies “self dispatched” to the WTC Complex. The Pentagon response also encountered significant problems with self dispatching (Chapter 9, page 315).
 - Several efforts were made to track the location of resources but none were successful (Chapter 9).
 - Some NYPD ESU teams entering the WTC Towers’ lobbies to head into the stairwells were either rebuffed or declined to check in with the FDNY Command Centers there, they went up the stairwells anyway (page 303).
 - Initial response to the WTC Towers was not coordinated and the response at the South Tower was significantly understaffed (page 299).
 - Many of the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) personnel responding to the incident “lacked suitable protective equipment to enter the complex” (page 305).
 - Some floors of the WTC Towers were searched multiple times for victims (Chapter 9).
 - ICS was used effectively at the Pentagon to coordinate response efforts between local, state, and federal officials (page 314).
- Professional relationships and trust between responding agencies were integral to the well coordinated response at the Pentagon (page 314).
- A regional approach to response was also key at the Pentagon – responders had worked together through regional events and exercises (page 314).
- Had another terrorist attack occurred in New York on 9/11, “the FDNY’s response would have been severely compromised.” (page 320)

Recommendations

- “Recommendation: Emergency response agencies nationwide should adopt the Incident Command System (ICS). When multiple agencies or multiple jurisdictions are involved, they should adopt a unified command. Both are proven frameworks for emergency response. We strongly support the decision that federal homeland security funding will be contingent, as of October 1, 2004, upon the adoption and regular use of ICS and unified command procedures. In the future, the Department of Homeland Security should consider making funding contingent on aggressive and realistic training in accordance with ICS and unified command procedures.” (page 397)

- “Public safety organizations, chief administrative officers, state emergency management agencies, and the Department of Homeland Security should develop a regional focus within the emergency responder community and promote multi-jurisdictional mutual assistance compacts. Where such compacts already exist, training in accordance with their terms should be required. Congress should pass legislation to remedy the long-standing indemnification and liability impediments to the provision of public safety mutual aid in the National Capital Region and where applicable throughout the nation.” (page 397)
- “Recommendation: Congress should support pending legislation which provides for the expedited and increased assignment of radio spectrum for public safety purposes. Furthermore, high-risk urban areas such as New York City and Washington, D.C., should establish signal corps units to ensure communications connectively between and among civilian authorities, local first responders, and the National Guard. Federal funding of such units should be given high priority by Congress.” (page 397)

911 Communications Centers – Chapters 9 and 12

Lessons

- Particularly with the proliferation of cell phones, dispatchers must be adequately linked to the emergency response:
 - Information shared by dispatchers on 9/11 according to standard operating procedures, but with limited information about what was occurring the field, hampered civilian evacuations of the WTC Towers – there were things transmitted to civilians at the WTC such as, “stay in your current location,” and not telling civilians anticipating rooftop rescue that such a rescue was not possible. (page 286, 292)
 - “In planning for future disasters, it is important to integrate those taking 911 calls into the emergency response team and to involve them in providing up-to-date information to the public.” (page 318)

Local Law Enforcement - Chapters 9, 12, and 13

Lessons

- Better access to information about known terrorists is needed to assist in apprehending terrorists when they come in contact with local law enforcement agencies for things like traffic violations, etc (page 253).
- Threat reporting held by federal agencies must be disseminated (page 254).

Recommendations

- “Recommendation: Targeting travel is at least as powerful a weapon against terrorists as targeting their money. The United States should combine terrorist travel intelligence, operations, and law enforcement in a strategy to intercept terrorists, find terrorist travel facilitators, and constrain terrorist mobility.” (page 385)
- “Recommendation: The U.S. border security system should be integrated into a larger network of screening points that includes our transportation system and access to vital facilities, such as nuclear reactors. The President should direct the Department of Homeland Security to lead the effort to design a comprehensive screening system, addressing common problems and setting common standards with system wide goals in mind. Extending those standards among other governments could dramatically strengthen America and the world’s collective ability to intercept individuals who pose catastrophic threats.” (page 387)
- “We should reach out to immigrant communities.” (page 390)
- “Recommendation: Hard choices must be made in allocating limited resources. The U.S. government should identify and evaluate the transportation assets that need to

be protected, set risk-based priorities for defending them, select the most practical and cost-effective ways of doing so, and then develop a plan, budget, and funding to implement the effort.” (page 391)

- “Recommendation: A specialized and integrated national security workforce should be established at the FBI consisting of agents, analysts, linguists, and surveillance specialists who are recruited, trained, rewarded, and retained to ensure the development of an institutional culture imbued with a deep expertise in intelligence and national security.” (page 426)
- “Each field office should have an official at the office’s deputy level for national security matters. This individual would have management oversight and ensure that the national priorities are carried out in the field.” (page 426)

Emergency Management, Private Companies and Building Safety Officials – Chapters 9 and 12

Lessons

- “Emergency response is a byproduct of preparedness.” (page 278)
- There was likely confusion on 9/11 that rooftop rescues were a possibility because some occurred after the 1993 WTC bombing, yet there was no plan for these rescues and this was not communicated to WTC employees during drills – in fact, the roof doors were locked and civilians were not informed of that (pages 280, 318).
- Civilians, during drills, also were not instructed of conditions they would likely encounter upon descent (page 318).
- During drills following the 1993 bombing, civilians were not “directed into the stairwells or provided with information about their configuration and about the existence of transfer hallways and smoke doors.” (page 281)
- Regular fire drills and evacuation enhancements, such as improved lighting, were credited with saving many WTC occupants on 9/11 (page 316).
- “85% of the nation’s critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector and therefore the private sector is likely to be the first responders to any future catastrophes.” (page 317)
- “Civilians need to take responsibility for maximizing the probability that they will survive” (page 318) – items like flashlights were invaluable to those that had them.

Recommendations

- “Recommendation: We endorse the American National Standards Institute’s recommended standard for private preparedness. We were encouraged by Secretary Tom Ridge’s praise for the standard, and urge the Department of Homeland Security to promote its adoption. We also encourage the insurance and credit-rating industries to look closely at the company’s compliance with the ANSI standard in assessing its insurability and creditworthiness. We believe that compliance with the standard should define the standard of care owed by a company to its employees and the public for legal purposes. Private-sector preparedness is not a luxury; it is a cost of doing business in the post-9/11 world. It is ignored at a tremendous potential cost in lives, money, and national security.” (page 398)

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